

**DESECE - Experience “Mediation on human rights violation cases”
Most Significant Change Story**

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

My name is Salina Nangekhe from Bungoma West Sub County. I am 58 years and a widow with 7 children, 4 boys and 3 girls. For me, life changed from April 2013 when I attended a human rights workshop at Mabanga farmers training centre organized by DESECE organization.

The workshop was enlightening and I managed to learn different things which have enabled me to be where I am now. Before, I was very poor in my community. Nobody recognized me despite being a widow.

After my husband passed away, my brother in-law took all items from me including ownership of our land where I practiced farming with my husband. That land was the only major asset we owned. They believed that women cannot own land, not under any circumstance at all and to them, I could not manage their brother's land as he would have done it himself.

In the workshop, issues of human rights violations against women were highlighted and I discovered that my rights had been violated when my in laws had invaded my house a few days after my husband died and taken some of his possession like his clothes and had farmed on our land without considering my opinion as his wife.

My life was like a dream and far from reality; I was unable to do anything due to lack of income because my source of income; the piece of land had been snatched from me by my brothers in law. Getting money to my pocket was history since the farming I depended on, no longer existed; my children remained without food in store. We resorted to manual labor to sustain our livelihoods.

In the workshop, I also realized that some issues were not going on well in my community. Widows and orphans truly suffered mistreatment from relatives especially the in-laws. Their lands had been taken away by in laws and they remained poor even to the extent of their children dropping out of school.

The facilitator of the day discussed on legalizing property ownership through succession where he said that in case one's husband dies, a death certificate should be acquired and used to acquire the legal status of the land by the sole beneficiary who is the wife and children. I later visited DESECE organization where I was assisted on the procedure of having the possession of my late husband's land lawfully and also avoid conflict with my relatives.

I together with my In-laws was summoned to DESECE offices where we were talked to by one of their officers on issues concerning land and peaceful coexistence in the society. Later on we reconciled with my In-laws and agreed that I should follow the procedures to acquire the land in my name. I did succession and the in laws were also later on summoned by the chief for a meeting. Land ownership issues were discussed and finally it was decided that the law recognized me as the sole beneficiary and it was resolved that the land be given back to me to continue with my farming.

Other members of the community who had the same problems were put on notice and assisted by the area chief and DESECE officer to solve the problem in legally recognized succession steps. In my community people are now happy because conflicts concerning land issues and property ownership have been reduced because most people know that it is illegal to snatch land from widows and orphans.

I now link people with similar problems to DESECE Organization to be assisted. I have been appointed by the community to be the ambassador and link to DESECE Organization and other organizations. People in my community are now happy because they know where they can get assistance when they are in trouble. My joy is to see my community members smiling.